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Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report summarizes the situation of Palestinian women between October 2007 and September 2008, in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 2008/11. It reviews the situation of Palestinian women and provides an overview of the assistance provided by entities of the United Nations system with regard to, inter alia, education and training; health; employment and entrepreneurship; women's human rights; violence against women; and humanitarian assistance. The report concludes with recommendations for consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 2008/11 on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women, the Economic and Social Council, concerned about the grave situation of Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, requested the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation, in order to assist Palestinian women by all available means, including those laid out in the previous report of the Secretary-General on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women (E/CN.6/2008/6), and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-third session a report, including information provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution.

2. The present report covers the period from October 2007 to September 2008 and reviews the situation of Palestinian women based on information from United Nations bodies or individuals that monitor the situation of Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. Such bodies and individuals include the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, and the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

3. The report also reflects information submitted by entities of the United Nations system that provide assistance to Palestinian women, including the Department of Political Affairs of the Secretariat, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the World Food Programme (WFP).

4. The following United Nations entities contributed their input to the present report through the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory: the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), UNICEF, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), WFP, and the World Health Organization (WHO).

5. The report concludes with recommendations on improving the situation of Palestinian women, including through the continued assistance of the United Nations system.

II. Situation of Palestinian women

6. During the reporting period, new hope for the achievement of a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine emerged, with the launch of the Annapolis process and regular bilateral negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. The

Quartet, the League of Arab States, several Arab countries, as well as Turkey, contributed to regional efforts to advance peace (see A/63/368-S/2008/612, paras. 6-9).

7. The situation on the ground in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, remained difficult and hampered political efforts to achieve the vision of two States living side by side in peace and security. In the Gaza Strip, in particular, prolonged violence and a deepening humanitarian crisis prevailed (ibid., para. 5). Despite the efforts to bring about peace, deaths and injuries resulting from the occupation and the internal conflict increased during 2007 and continued to rise in the first months of 2008.[1] In 2007, some 412 Palestinians were killed, including 10 women. Approximately 345 people were killed between the beginning of 2008 and 21 April 2008, 89 per cent of them in the Gaza Strip, including 31 women and 80 children.[2]

8. Within the framework of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, peacebuilding efforts by Palestinian organizations continued despite the difficult political circumstances. Civil society organizations, such as The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy (MIFTAH) focused efforts on linking the political and social agendas of the Palestinian women's movement at the grass-roots level. In addition, the International Women's Commission for a Just and Sustainable Palestinian-Israeli Peace engaged in policy dialogue at the international and national levels, to increase women's participation in peace negotiations. The Commission included 20 Palestinian women leaders, working within governmental and non-governmental Palestinian organizations.[3]

9. Internal conflict in the Occupied Palestinian Territory compounded existing hardships. After the Hamas takeover of Gaza, additional restrictions on the movement of goods and people into the Gaza Strip, led to deteriorating conditions and shortages of basic commodities, including food, electricity and fuel. Increased restrictions on the operations of humanitarian agencies hindered the delivery of humanitarian aid in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank (see A/63/74-E/2008/13, summary).

10. The Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories expressed serious concern about the continuing deterioration of the human rights and humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (see A/63/273, paras. 114-118). In particular, the Committee noted that isolation of the Gaza Strip had the most dramatic impact on women and children (ibid., para. 45).

11. The right to freedom of movement continued to be obstructed in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In January 2008, the Human Rights Council expressed grave concern about "the continued closures of and within the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the restriction of the freedom of movement of people and goods, including the repeated closure of the crossing points of the Gaza Strip, which created an extremely precarious humanitarian situation for the civilian population

[1] World Health Organization, Health conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan: report of the Secretariat (A/61/INF.DOC./4), annex, para. 1.

[2] Ibid., para. 13.

[3] Department of Political Affairs contribution to the report (2008).

and impaired the economic and social rights of the Palestinian people".[4] In September 2008, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported 630 obstacles blocking Palestinian movement, including 93 staffed checkpoints and 537 unstaffed obstacles in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.[5]

12. The conflict continued to negatively impact the Palestinian economy as restrictions were tightened in the West Bank and Gaza's primary border crossings remained closed, thus constraining development projects.[6] The International Monetary Fund reported that the macroeconomic environment had been less favourable than envisaged, unemployment and poverty remained high, especially in Gaza, and real incomes in the West Bank and Gaza were reduced by the sharp rise in inflation.[6] The World Bank noted that as the Palestinian economy declined, the Occupied Palestinian Territory was steadily becoming more aid dependent.[7]

13. Based on the Palestinian Expenditure and Consumption Survey for 2007, about 79 per cent of households in Gaza and 46 per cent in the West Bank lived below the poverty line.[8] In 2008, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs found that previously self-reliant families progressively were falling into poverty owing to the deteriorating Palestinian livelihoods.[9] In fact, nearly two thirds (62.5 per cent) of female-headed households live in poverty.[10] To cope with poverty and food insecurity, many parents reduced their food intake to allow their children to eat.[11]

14. Poverty and the global rise in food prices greatly affect Palestinian living conditions.[7] Owing to inadequate income and employment, 80 per cent of households in Gaza (1.3 million people), and 33 per cent in the West Bank (0.7 million people), are dependent on international food assistance.[12] A joint FAO/WFP/UNRWA rapid survey on food security found that despite humanitarian aid, food insecurity was on the rise and almost two thirds of household income was spent on food only.[13] Moreover, the study found that women and children continued to be disproportionately affected by food insecurity. Food insecurity was found in households where the percentage of female residents was 50 per cent or higher.[11] This was explained by unequal employment rates between men and women with almost equal education levels, and the lack of integration of women in the formal labour market.[11]

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[4] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-third Session, Supplement No. 53* (A/63/53), chap. II.A, resolution 7/18, para. 3 (f).

[5] OCHA Closure Update: Main Findings and Analysis (30 April-11 September 2008), September 2008.

[6] International Monetary Fund, "Macroeconomic and Fiscal Framework for the West Bank and Gaza: Second Review of Progress", 22 September 2008.

[7] World Bank, "Palestinian Economic Prospects: Aid, Access and Reform", September 2008.

[8] UNRWA, "Prolonged Crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory: Socio-economic Developments in 2007", 2008, chap. VI.

[9] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *The Humanitarian Monitor — Occupied Palestinian Territory*, No. 25 (May 2008).

[10] UNFPA Occupied Palestinian Territory Consolidated Appeals Process 2008.

[11] United Nations country team Occupied Palestinian Territory contribution to the report (2008).

[12] International Labour Organization, Report of the Director-General, on the situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories, 2008.

[13] World Food Programme, *Food Security and Market Monitoring Report*, No. 19 (July 2008).

15. During the period under review, the employment and labour situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory continued to deteriorate. ILO reported a much degraded employment and labour situation owing to continuing impediments to the movement of persons and goods in the West Bank and in East Jerusalem. Only one in three persons of working age was employed; enterprises were either closing or operating well below their capacity and new investments were deferred.[12]

16. Women were more likely not to participate in the labour force than men. For the second quarter (April-June 2008), the labour participation rate of women was 16.0 per cent compared to 66.3 per cent for men.[14] Some 64.4 per cent of men with 13 or more years of schooling participated in the labour force, compared to 42.1 per cent of women with the same number of years of schooling.[14] For young women aged 15 to 19, the participation rate was 2.1 per cent compared to 25.4 per cent for young men of the same age group.[15]

17. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics reported that for the second quarter of 2008 (April-June), the percentage of women in agriculture, fishing and forestry was higher than that of men — 30.7 per cent of women and 11.0 per cent of men.[16] An ILO study found that 60 per cent of female workers and only 16 per cent of male workers were located in the informal economy.[17] The high percentage of women in informal employment was attributed to the lack of an adequate and affordable social infrastructure and services that placed the burden of caring for the young, elderly, and the sick on women, thus limiting their employment options and steering them into informal work arrangements often performed from home.[17]

18. Movement restrictions negatively affected women's health. In the period under review, 69 pregnant women were forced to give birth at Israeli military checkpoints. Thirty-nine babies and five women died as a result.[18] Since childbirth facilities are located in urban-based hospitals, some pregnant women moved to the homes of relatives living in towns a few weeks before the expected delivery (see A/HRC/7/44, para. 7 (d) and (e)). The attendance rate for newly pregnant women at maternal and child health-care clinics decreased from 4.8 visits per pregnant woman in 2005 to 3.7 visits per pregnant woman in 2006.[19] The Ministry of Health collaborated with international agencies, including UNICEF, to secure vaccines for newborn babies, children and mothers.[20]

19. WHO reported that the health conditions of female prisoners in general were extremely difficult and poor.[21] At the end of July 2008, it was reported that 77 Palestinian female security prisoners were held in Israeli prisons and detention centres.[22] Approximately 25 per cent of Palestinian female prisoners suffered from

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[14] Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force Survey (April-June 2008) Round (Q2/2008), 15 September 2008, table 6.

[15] Ibid., table 8.

[16] Palestinian Authority: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics: Labour Force Survey (April-June 2008).

[17] International Labour Organization, *Unprotected Employment in the West Bank and Gaza Strip: A Gender Equality and Workers' Rights Perspective*, Beirut, 2008, Executive Summary.

[18] World Health Organization, 2008, op. cit., para. 16.

[19] World Health Organization, 2008, op. cit., para. 61.

[20] Ibid, para. 63.

[21] Ibid., para. 12.

[22] Mandela Institute for Human Rights, referenced in the UNIFEM executed project "Protection of Female Prisoners and Detainees in Israeli Prisons and Detention Centers", as cited in United Nations country team contribution to the report (2008).

treatable illnesses, including excessive weight loss, general weakness, anaemia and iron deficiency owing to poor quality food and the lack of essential nutrients.[23] In addition, they were exposed to harsh treatment from male and female prison officers, with no regard for their condition or their special needs in pregnancy.[21]

20. Recent assessments of the psychosocial well-being of the Palestinian population showed that severe stress and other mental health problems had increased. The prolonged tension, lack of physical security, mobility restrictions and limited educational and leisure opportunities were identified as some of the causes of psychological strain for many Palestinians, especially women, children and adolescents.[10]

21. Incidents of violence against women, including domestic violence, continued during the period under review. Results of a UNFPA survey and a UNRWA qualitative study associated the increase of domestic violence rates with the rising political violence in 2007.[11] The UNRWA study also indicated that rates of domestic violence had risen since the commencement of the second intifada in September 2000, with men using women as outlets for their anger, frustration and powerlessness.[11] UNFPA found that the majority of married (61.7 per cent) and unmarried (53.3 per cent) women were exposed to psychological violence.[10] Poverty, low education levels, lack of decision-making power, violent childhoods, conflict in the community, drug abuse and lack of access to divorce were all viewed by refugee women as causes of domestic violence. A link was also made between little or no income in female-headed households and domestic and gender-based violence.[11]

22. The right to education continued to be seriously affected by the occupation.[11] Although girls outnumbered boys in primary and secondary enrolment for the academic year 2007/2008 (548,781 women versus 548,314 men), the female dropout rate continued to surpass the male dropout rate at the secondary level — 3.8 per cent versus 3 per cent.[24] The school dropouts were attributed to early marriage, the economic situation and travel restrictions.[11] In the period under review, UNICEF also reported that young Palestinian girls continued to have few opportunities for development, recreation and participation. There were few safe spaces for them to go, and most of the 300 youth clubs across the Occupied Palestinian Territory lacked funding and were poorly managed and equipped. UNICEF also indicated that adolescence was often compromised by household demands and early marriage of young women and girls.[25]

23. The percentage of women in decision-making remained low. According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, women accounted for 12.6 per cent of the members of the Legislative Council; 7.4 per cent of ambassadors; 11.2 per cent of judges; and 12.1 per cent of general prosecutors.[26]

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[23] Fact sheet "Medical neglect of Palestinian Women in Israeli prisons", published by Addameer Prisoners Support and Human Rights Association, Mandela Institute for Human Rights and Palestinian Counseling Center, June 2008, within the Protection of Palestinian Female Prisoners and Detainees in Israeli Prisons and Detention Centers project, available at: http://www.aseerat.ps/files/FactsheetJune2008_-_Neglect.pdf (in United Nations country team contribution).

[24] Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "Palestine in Figures 2007", May 2008, p. 23.

[25] UNICEF contribution to the report (2008).

[26] Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, press release, 6 March 2008.

III. Assistance to Palestinian women

24. The following section focuses on the assistance provided to Palestinian women by entities of the United Nations system. Based on contributions from United Nations entities, eight areas of support were identified: education and training; health; employment and entrepreneurship; women's human rights; violence against women; humanitarian assistance; advocacy and information; and interagency coordination efforts, including gender mainstreaming.

A. Education and training

25. Several United Nations entities reported on initiatives to improve the access of women and girls to quality education opportunities and a gender-sensitive curriculum. During the 2006/2007 academic year, 241,183 girls (50.1 per cent of pupils) were enrolled in UNRWA elementary, preparatory and secondary schools. Girls constituted 69.8 per cent of students benefiting from the UNRWA-administered scholarships. UNDP provided remedial literacy and English and computer training to 3,925 female dropout students.

26. As part of the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) framework and in collaboration with UNICEF, UNIFEM and UNFPA, UNESCO commissioned a study on "Scaling up" girls' education in 2007. As a follow-up to the study, a Vocational Guidance and Counselling System was established within the Palestinian education system, supported by UNESCO. UNICEF worked with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education to, inter alia, provide math and science teaching kits to disadvantaged schools to improve the teaching and learning process in classrooms. UNICEF also supported the finalization of the five-year education plan aimed at providing equal and quality educational opportunities for girls and boys. Six young women were employed by UNIFEM to offer academic guidance to young girls in schools. UNFPA supported the Ministry of Education's efforts to increase access to gender-sensitive life-skills based sexual and reproductive health education in secondary schools.

27. Construction and/or rehabilitation of community buildings for schools and the provision of school supplies were reported by United Nations entities as key steps to support girls' access to education. For example, UNDP supported the construction of classrooms, libraries and laboratories in 16 schools, including all-girls schools. It supported the construction of three kindergartens that were managed by women's centres or local councils, and created six permanent jobs for women as teachers and administrators. UNICEF worked with the Palestinian Water Authority and the Coastal Municipal Water Utility to provide water to 120 schools, construct 10 sanitary units at Farabi Girls Primary School, and raise awareness on personal hygiene and environmental sanitation in schools and selected vulnerable communities.

28. Training programmes for women were provided in a wide range of areas related to vocational and professional development. UNRWA reported that 2,109 girls received technical and vocational training (36.3 per cent of total students). Some 53 per cent of the Agency's more than 18,000 teaching staff were women. Professional training opportunities were offered to 445 of the teaching staff, 49 per cent of whom were women. Through its Small and Microenterprise Training

Programme, customized for the needs of microentrepreneurs and small business owners in Gaza, the Agency offered 563 courses for more than 11,907 participants, 20 per cent of them women. UNESCO and the Ministry of Culture trained 25 Palestinian women in traditional arts and crafts. Within the UNESCO Architectural Competition for the Design of Public Spaces and Urban Facilities in the Old City of Nablus, 16 young women architects were assigned to professionals to develop their design concepts into executive designs. Four junior women architects benefited from "learning by doing" training associated with the Bethlehem Area Conservation and Management Plan.

29. Training programmes were also promoted as a means to enhance women's leadership and increase their access to and benefits from information and communication technologies. For example, in 2007, UNESCO supported the project "Giving women a voice" to build capacity and campaigning skills of 20 young women community leaders in Hebron and the southern rural area of the West Bank. In 2008, UNESCO also supported the project "Women taking the lead", in cooperation with the Arabic Media Internet Network, which provided a training and career development programme for 15 women journalists and 30 media managers in Gaza and West Bank.

30. In Gaza, UNDP established centres aimed at providing equal access to social and economic services for women and their families. In addition to developing women's skills, the centres also offered women safe meeting and working spaces and informal psychosocial support. Some 219 training courses, seminars or workshops were held on an annual basis in the centres; 65 women benefited from permanent jobs created by the centres.

B. Health

31. Several United Nations entities reported on activities to promote equal access to health care for Palestinian women. WHO facilitated health coordination meetings with health-care providers at district level, to formulate solutions to women's and girls' needs for preventive health services, including mammography tests. WHO collaborated with UNFPA in providing medicines and equipment for health services targeted to women of childbearing age.

32. In collaboration with the Ministry of Health and the Palestinian Red Crescent Society, UNICEF provided 452 first aid kits, 13 emergency health kits, 10 midwifery kits, 16 obstetric surgical kits and 60 resuscitation kits to the Ministry of Health and the Palestinian Red Crescent Society.

33. UNRWA offered full immunization coverage of women against vaccine-preventable diseases. UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health with the procurement of vaccines and related supplies for more than 100,000 women of childbearing age.

34. With support from UNIFEM, permits were obtained for 28 external doctors to enter prisons and examine female prisoners in need of specialized medical care.

35. Family planning and antenatal care were given priority by a number of entities to ensure safe deliveries for women in isolated areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Approximately 90,000 women received antenatal care in the five fields of UNRWA operation. More than 24,000 new female patients sought guidance on

family planning. WHO provided the Ministry of Health with recommendations aimed at improving pregnant women's access to health facilities. UNFPA supported 39 public clinics aimed at strengthening the integration of reproductive health services in primary health care, and promoted attention to gender-based violence in counselling services offered in primary health-care facilities. Qualified staff, including physicians, nurses and midwives, were retrained by UNFPA as obstetric care emergency staff in the West Bank and Gaza.

36. Various entities also provided psychosocial counselling to women. The UNRWA Community Mental Health Programme in the West Bank and Gaza Strip provided psychosocial support to 6,321 Palestinian refugee women. Four UNFPA-supported women's health centres provided clinical, psychosocial, legal advice, outreach, physiotherapy, gymnastics and health education services to women living in underprivileged areas of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. UNIFEM continued to provide rural women in marginalized areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip with legal and psychosocial group counselling sessions, one-on-one consultations and specialized treatment for mental health problems. During the period under review, UNIFEM trained 115 women leaders as community resource persons on mental health issues. One-on-one psychosocial consultation/counselling was provided to 150 women, and an additional 1,200 women benefited from group psychological counselling sessions.

37. UNDP organized workshops and provided psychosocial support to 500 women. Five women were employed to conduct counselling services and train other women on conflict resolution, self-confidence and communication skills. UNDP also conducted health-awareness sessions and provided free medical consultations for 6,270 women, and psychological and legal-awareness sessions for 12,620 women to help them to cope with stress. In partnership with UNIFEM, UNICEF reinforced its crisis intervention teams in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, to increase their ability to deal more effectively with women needing psychosocial assistance.

38. Gender-sensitive health education and training programmes, including on HIV/AIDS, was provided. UNRWA promoted health education programmes on HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, including for its entire staff.

39. WHO supported the Ministry of Health in establishing and operating thematic groups on reproductive health, nutrition and mental health, to facilitate and coordinate activities of care providers, providing advice, recommending priorities and exchanging information.

C. Employment and entrepreneurship

40. United Nations entities reported on efforts to create work for women to promote self-reliance and restore livelihoods that would contribute to longer-term food security. WFP prepared a package of job creation, income-generation, vocational training and livelihood support to assist poor farmers, unemployed workers and vulnerable women. Priority was given to female-headed households which comprise 33.6 per cent (2,850) of the beneficiaries assisted in the West Bank and 50.6 per cent (82,560) in Gaza.

41. Thirty per cent of the beneficiaries of the UNRWA Job Creation Programme, operating in the West Bank and Gaza, were women. Within this Programme,

UNRWA/Gaza Field Office developed a maternity policy that enabled pregnant contract holders to enjoy 42 days of unpaid maternity leave without losing their jobs. A gender-sensitive monitoring mechanism was created to ensure a decent work environment for women, including through the UNRWA Breastfeeding Policy.

42. Several United Nations entities provided grants and training to enhance Palestinian women's entrepreneurship. UNDP offered training to 18 low-income women in two women's centres in Jabalia and Nuseirat. Some 24 women benefited from the construction of the Jenin Vocational Training Centre and its courses on fashion design, computer and secretarial skills. In the Gaza Strip, UNDP trained 1,043 poor housewives on recycling household waste and manufacturing home decorations; conducted income-generation projects for five women organizations; and trained 30 women on starting and managing their own businesses. The UNDP programme also trained 60 women on civic education. In the West Bank, UNIFEM trained 250 poor women on managerial and technical skills to process local surplus of fruits and vegetables into healthy marketable products.

43. The ILO Regional Office in Beirut, together with the Palestinian firm Riyada Consulting and Training, prepared a paper entitled "Situation and institutional assessment of business women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory", which assessed the level of involvement of women in private sector institutions. In March 2008, ILO conducted a regional training of trainers on "Gender and entrepreneurship together", attended by four Palestinian representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), business women associations and training centres, with the objective of assisting ILO partner organizations to promote enterprise development among poor women.

44. UNRWA and IFAD reported microcredit schemes for women as critical to poverty reduction and women's economic empowerment. UNRWA disbursed over 2,030 new group loans valued at almost US$ 900,000 to women microentrepreneurs in the Gaza Strip. Through its direct and indirect lending schemes, the Agency extended 1,950 microcredit loans to Palestine refugees, 81 per cent of whom were women.

45. FAO completed the women's empowerment project on "Support to household food security and income generation through biointensive backyard agricultural production and cottage industry in the West Bank and Gaza Strip", which targets East Jerusalem, Hebron, Jenin and Gaza. Beehives and rabbits were distributed to 500 women for income generation and household consumption. FAO promoted a national exhibition for women's associations in Ramallah, which allowed them to market their crafts and their agricultural and food products. The FAO Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools scheme was also launched to build livelihood and entrepreneurship skills of youth, including young women. The project liaises with 16 NGOs throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

46. UNCTAD reported on its two-year project (2006-2008) titled "Establishment of the Palestinian Shippers Council", which represents and protects the interests of Palestinian shippers and exporters. UNCTAD emphasized that the Council, which is chaired by a businesswoman, is committed to recruiting female members and encourages their full participation in all Council activities.

D. Women's human rights

47. United Nations entities reported advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns on the human rights of women and girls. On the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women in 2007, OHCHR implemented a three-day campaign in the West Bank aimed at promoting the protection of the rights of Palestinian women. UNDP conducted an awareness-raising campaign on violence against women, offered courses for 1,200 women and men on women's rights and trained 20 female lawyers on women's rights advocacy for women victims exposed to violence.

48. During the period under review, significant support was provided to capacity-building on women's human rights. OHCHR, in cooperation with the Palestinian Working Women Society for Development, organized an event for 30 men and women that focused on the challenges faced by women in the enjoyment of their human rights, best practices on legal investigations on violence against women and girls and ways to access the United Nations mechanisms for the protection of women's rights. UNIFEM supported the production of a gender-sensitive academic counselling manual and the provision of legal literacy sessions to nearly 1,500 women about the Palestinian legal system. A regional workshop for judges and parliamentarians on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was co-organized by the ESCWA Centre for Women and the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women in Jordan in October 2007. Three Palestinian women attended the training, one member of the Palestinian Legislative Council and two judges.

49. Through its project "Palestinian Women's Research and Documentation Centre" in Ramallah, UNESCO supported the development of the human and institutional capacities of governmental and non-governmental organizations related to women's rights. UNESCO and the Centre for Women's Legal Research and Consulting in the Gaza Strip, started collecting stories of discrimination against women to contribute to the UNIFEM initiative entitled "The CEDAW Stories". Seventy stories had been collected up to August 2008. UNESCO also commissioned a paper entitled "Listening to girls' stories: girls' education in conflict"; and produced a fact sheet on Palestinian women and education. The Centre for Women's Legal Research and Consulting conducted several trainings targeted at Government and NGOs. A total of 28 staff members from the legal department of the Palestinian Authority were also trained on analysing laws from a gender perspective. Qualitative and quantitative research methods were taught from a gender perspective to 42 trainees from departments in the Palestinian Authority by the Centre.

50. UNFPA collaborated with the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling, a Jerusalem-based Palestinian NGO, in the development of a manual for service providers on a gender-sensitive approach to psychosocial and legal counselling. The UNRWA Gaza Field Office launched the wide-reaching empowerment initiative, "Equality in action", focusing on achieving equality with regard to status, options and opportunities for women and men across the Gaza Strip. Through its 65 women's programme centres, the Agency supported evening classes and continued learning for 2,345 women, awareness sessions on women's rights for 11,952 women and youth-related activities for 19,529 girls. UNIFEM organized activities and workshops, including on the Convention on the Elimination of All

Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in 80 community centres in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

51. United Nations entities reported on efforts to promote the rights of young women. UNICEF Jordan promoted awareness-raising activities targeted at parents and community members on the rights of adolescents, particularly those of girls. These activities led to an increase in the participation of girls in developmental and learning activities in women's programme centres. UNIFEM continued supporting the Youth Rights Monitor project, implemented by a local NGO specialized on media and youth. A group of 98 youth role-model-activists (50 females and 48 males) was formed to promote awareness on rights and responsibilities among their peers and younger beneficiaries.

52. Women with special needs were also the focus of various initiatives promoted by United Nations entities. For example, OHCHR, in partnership with the Stars of Hope Society for Empowerment of Women with Disability, organized a high-level event entitled "Try the wheelchair", to sensitize participants about the reality of Palestinian women living with disabilities. In Rafah Governorate, UNDP established a special club for hearing-impaired women and men and provided activities for approximately 200 members, including art, handcraft and sports.

E. Violence against women

53. United Nations entities continued to address violence against women as a serious violation of the human rights of women. For example, in December 2007, a one-week study tour for 14 representatives of local Palestinian NGOs from the West Bank was hosted by OHCHR in Geneva, to enhance the interaction of NGOs with the United Nations human rights mechanisms and to design strategies to combat violence against women. A national conference on combating gender-based violence was organized by UNFPA and the Ministry of Women's Affairs. In the Occupied Palestinian Territory, field research on forced prostitution and women's trafficking was supported by UNIFEM and implemented by a local NGO. UNIFEM upgraded two toll-free help lines in Gaza and one in the West Bank for female victims of violence. More than 9,300 women received counselling and awareness-raising through this initiative.

54. United Nations entities undertook several initiatives aimed at training women to protect themselves from violence and enhancing the institutional capacity of NGO partners to prevent violence and support victims. For example, UNFPA and its NGO partners created community-based initiatives that enable women to protect themselves from gender-based violence. The Fund also helped to build the capacity of local institutions to integrate women's protection within the package of psychological support offered for women at risk; and promoted the collaboration of two NGOs in the West Bank and one in the Gaza Strip, to strengthen their awareness-raising capacity at the community level on violence against women.

55. Entities from the United Nations reported efforts to build alliances with strategic governmental organizations, as well as civic and civil society actors, to prevent violence against women. For example, UNFPA worked with civil society and faith-based organizations on the promotion of women's rights and the elimination of harmful practices, including female genital mutilation. In 2008, UNFPA and the Ministry of Social Affairs started a project to strengthen vocational

training for young women and to enhance the capacity of Ministry staff in the area of protection against and prevention of gender-based violence.

56. UNFPA also worked with national partners in their implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, through the creation of community-based initiatives that empower women to protect themselves from gender-based violence. These initiatives also helped to build the capacity of NGOs to improve services, particularly psychosocial support. UNIFEM continued its support of the International Women's Commission for a Just and Sustainable Palestinian-Israeli Peace.[3]

F. Humanitarian assistance

57. United Nations entities continued to provide humanitarian assistance to Palestinian women living in refugee camps and disadvantaged villages. For example, UNRWA assisted the poorest registered refugees, mostly families headed by women. The Agency's special hardship assistance provided the families with a safety net that included food support, cash assistance, and preferential access to the Agency's vocational training centres.

58. Food security was addressed as a priority in several initiatives undertaken by United Nations entities. School feeding in the most insecure areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip aimed at encouraging parents to keep children in school and provided employment opportunities to the community. The WFP Food for Training Programme implemented in the West Bank targeted 9,200 women and focused on home gardening, handicrafts, food processing, animal raising, agriculture and beekeeping. Some 8,400 women benefited from life-skills training on health and nutrition. Through a cash-for-work scheme, the Programme also introduced school feeding to preschool and primary school children in the most food-insecure areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It provided part of the food commodities and salaries for 2,000 women in local bakeries and women's centres. The UNRWA food aid programme benefited 112,256 pregnant women and nursing mothers and 56,587 women were assisted with admission to hospitals. In the Gaza Strip, UNIFEM piloted a school feeding initiative benefiting 450 children in kindergartens in the Nuseirat refugee camp, involving 12 women workers. In Jordan, UNICEF assisted Palestinian refugee women with access to neonatal care and nutrition support.

59. The WFP institutional feeding programme also supported women residing in institutions such as orphanages, hospitals and homes for the elderly. Beneficiaries of the programme included 2,400 women in Gaza and 5,100 women in the West Bank. Under the Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation, launched in September 2007, WFP and the Ministry of Social Affairs worked to cover the food needs of destitute people, in particular widows, divorced and separated women, and elderly single women. Some 57 per cent (15,000) of the beneficiaries in the West Bank and 55 per cent (47,000) in Gaza were women.

60. United Nations entities reported initiatives to contribute to adequate housing. For example, UNRWA assisted 265 female-headed households with shelter reconstruction or rehabilitation; 11 per cent of refugees participating in infrastructural self-help projects were women. The Saudi Committee for the Palestinian People Relief pledged $6.3 million to UN-Habitat for the project on "Establishment of a housing and income-generating programme for poor women in

Hebron, West Bank". The project includes the construction of 100 housing units and the establishment of small-scale income-generating activities targeted to poor women and their families.

G. Advocacy and information

61. Several United Nations entities collected, analysed and disseminated information on the situation of Palestinian women and advocated for women's empowerment and gender equality. For example, WHO continued to collect information on the health implications of restricted mobility for women.

62. Media resources were used as advocacy tools to bring attention to the situation of women in the region. For example, through its publications programme, the Division for the Palestinian Rights within the Department of Political Affairs included information on the situation of Palestinian women in its monthly compilation entitled "Chronological review of events relating to the question of Palestine", and the bimonthly newsletter "NGO Action News". UNFPA published a study entitled "Women in crisis and cultural preservation".

63. On the occasion of the "16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence Campaign 2007" (25 November-10 December 2007), UNFPA promoted actions to combat violence against women through posters, workshops, and television and radio spots, initiating a platform for discussion among a number of different actors. UNIFEM produced billboards and reserved radio time to advocate for women's rights. It also conducted advocacy and media campaigns on the conditions of women in prisons and detention centres. UNIFEM also screened a documentary entitled *Maria's Grotto*, on crimes committed in the name of honour, for over 600 women. In consultation with OHCHR, UNIFEM produced a DVD, *Women Capable of Making a Difference*, in Arabic with English subtitles, which sheds light on the situation of women in the Gaza Strip.

64. Initiatives on research and documentation on the situation of Palestinian women were supported by a number of United Nations entities. Under the guidance of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Department of Political Affairs, addressed the issue of Palestinian women in discussions at international meetings and conferences. The ILO Regional Office produced the study, *Unprotected Employment in the West Bank and Gaza Strip: A Gender Equality and Workers' Rights Perspective*, which was published in Arabic and English. The case study was presented during a Regional Expert Group Meeting on gender equality and workers' rights in the informal economies of Arab States, held in Tunis in July 2008.

65. The Advocacy and Research Unit of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs increased efforts to collect sex-disaggregated data in its Protection of Civilians database and increasingly paid attention to gender equality issues in its publications *Humanitarian Monitor* and *Protection of Civilians Weekly Report*.

H. Gender mainstreaming

66. Joint programming by United Nations entities is being promoted to enhance coordinated support to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including on gender mainstreaming initiatives. For example, the Department of Political Affairs reported that the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process oversaw six United Nations agencies' joint submission to the UNDP-Spain Millennium Development Global Achievement Fund in close collaboration with the Palestinian Authority. The United Nations country team reported that under the Fund, UNESCO, UNIFEM, UNDP and FAO also developed a three-year joint programme on "Culture and development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory" and UNIFEM provided technical support to ensure that a gender perspective was incorporated in the programme document.

67. UNDP took the initiative to build internal staff capacity on gender mainstreaming in order to provide effective support to Palestinian women. For example, training was provided to more than 40 operational and programme staff in the UNDP/Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (PAPP), including on gender sensitization, gender analysis, and gender sensitive indicators in programmes. A UNDP/PAPP gender strategy was drafted. In August 2008, a senior Social Development and Gender Adviser was hired to offer technical support to UNDP/PAPP and other United Nations entities, NGOs and governmental partners.

68. In June 2008, UNIFEM conducted two training sessions on gender mainstreaming. The first was targeted at key programme staff from United Nations entities, including those participating in the joint Millennium Development Goals programmes, and the Ministry of Planning and Ministry of Women's Affairs. The second involved heads of agencies in discussions on gender mainstreaming within the context of the United Nations country team Performance Indicators for Gender Equality. UNIFEM and FAO conducted a one-day sector-specific gender workshop on "Mainstreaming gender in agricultural issues", to discuss the meaning and importance of integrating gender perspective into planning, implementation and monitoring of food security-related projects.

69. Other entities adopted policies and employed specialists to advance the gender mainstreaming strategy. UNFPA partnered with civil society organizations to build their capacity in advocating for gender mainstreaming in the health sector and planning and budgeting processes. In November 2007, the ESCWA Centre for Women and UNIFEM organized a joint regional workshop on gender-responsive budgeting in Amman, which aimed at highlighting the importance of gender-responsive budgeting for incorporating gender perspectives into policies, programmes and projects. Two representatives from the national machinery on women of the Palestinian Authority attended the training.

70. Other United Nations entities adopted training as key for capacity-building for gender mainstreaming. ILO sponsored an official of the Ministry of Women's Affairs to participate in an intensive training course on participatory gender auditing in the ILO Training Centre in Turin, Italy, in May 2008, which resulted in the Ministry working on a strategy for implementing participatory gender audits within institutions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In September 2007, the ESCWA Centre for Women conducted an expert group meeting for the enhancement of the

work of national machineries for mainstreaming gender perspectives into policies, programmes and projects.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

71. **During the period under review, efforts continued at the national, regional and international levels to bring about a peaceful settlement in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including through bilateral negotiations. Despite these efforts, the crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory continued with negative social and economic impacts on the Palestinian people, including on women and girls.**

72. **The situation of Palestinian women was directly affected by continued poverty and unemployment and the decline in living standards and food security. The movement of women and girls continued to be restricted by closures, checkpoints and roadblocks, which limited their access to health-care services, employment and education. Pregnant women had difficulties accessing health services for antenatal care and safe delivery. Movement restrictions also contributed to school dropout rates among girls. Incidents of violence against women, including domestic violence, also continued during the period under review.**

73. **Improving the situation of and enhancing the impact of assistance to Palestinian women is linked to the achievement of a secure and lasting peace. Renewed efforts need to be taken by all relevant actors at the international, regional and national levels, including measures to ensure that women participate fully in all conflict resolution and peacebuilding in the region, in accordance with the Beijing Platform for Action and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security.**

74. **United Nations entities should continue to provide assistance to women and girls in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and refugee camps, particularly in areas such as education, health, social welfare, employment and economic development. Enhanced efforts should also be made to increase women's full participation in decision-making processes at all levels and ensure their economic empowerment.**

75. **A gender perspective should be fully integrated into all international assistance programmes, through, inter alia, gender analysis, the collection of sex-disaggregated data and the use of gender-responsive budgeting processes. All studies and reports undertaken by the United Nations on the situation of the Palestinian people should incorporate specific attention to gender equality perspectives. Governments, international organizations, civil society, including non-governmental organizations, and academic institutions, should be encouraged to collaborate on qualitative and quantitative action-oriented research on the situation of Palestinian women and girls.**

76. **Member States, entities of the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and other relevant stakeholders should intensify their efforts to provide financial and technical assistance to Palestinian women and girls and systematically assess and report on the impact of those efforts.**